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KT photo | Tim Bath

House of Burgess: Open letter to a murderer

By Rob Burgess

Tribune columnist

I'm not going to say your name. I'm not going to give you the satisfaction. One of my least favorite rappers, Nelly, once said: "You out of your brains, thinkin' I'm a shout out your name. You gotta come up with better ways than that to catch your fame." Yep, I'm willing name-check Nelly (twice, now) instead of you. In your face.

And from what I understand, you're not too fond of your true identity either. When you were apprehended July 20 outside the Aurora, Colo.. movie theater after shooting 71 people 10 minutes into the first

showing of “The Dark Knight Returns,” you told authorities that you were “The Joker.” In addition to your head-to-toe body armor, you had dyed red hair. (By the way, the Joker has green hair.) Since 2008’s “The Dark Knight” was the most recent Batman film, I’m guessing you weren’t referring to previous Jokers like Cesar Romero (from the original “Batman” TV series) or Jack Nicholson (from the 1989 Tim Burton-directed “Batman”).

Obviously, you’re going for some kind of nihilistic, anti-hero vibe by drawing from the late Heath Ledger’s phenomenal, doomed performance as the Joker. He says things like: “I’m an agent of chaos.” And: “The only sensible way to live in this world is without rules.” He is described by Alfred Pennyworth (Michael Caine) thus: “Some men just want to watch the world burn.”

My wife, Ash, and I decided to see “The Dark Knight Rises” Friday night anyway. I’ve seen the rest of the trilogy in theaters and I wasn’t about to let your foolishness stop me. Since you’ll probably never get to see the rest, let me break it down: you saw the best part. If you had just watched the entirety of it, you might have reconsidered. I certainly wouldn’t want to be forever connected to such a sub-par movie. It’s the most abysmal of the usually superb director Christopher Nolan’s films. It’s also the most insufferable Batman movie ever. (And I’ve seen “Batman and Robin” and “Batman

Forever.”) It’s an over-long, jumbled mess. It squanders any residual goodwill the last two movies may have garnered. Despite being 164 minutes (!) long, there’s hardly any action featuring Batman himself or any Batmobile. I would have rather re-watched the 1966 Adam West-starring “Batman: The Movie.” At least then I would have seen an entertaining film and been home an hour earlier. This could have been any other mediocre action movie if you removed all Batman references.

You obviously murdered 12 people and counting for attention. And you wanted to survive so you could enjoy the inevitable wall-to-wall news coverage. The Columbine massacre took place 13 miles and 13 years away when two students shot up their school and then finished themselves off. I don’t condone, but at least understand their motive: They felt trapped and exploded. What are you rebelling against? What were your victims’ crimes? Liking the same movies you do? And what, your bullets are good enough for everyone else, but not yourself? According to the National Institute for Corrections, keeping you incarcerated costs us around \$22,000 per year. What a waste.

I want to be known too, but you cheated. You didn’t earn any of this. How dare you. If we had any sense at all we’d have a media blackout on your treachery, the way we should have in April 2007 the Virginia Tech massacre perpetrator sent materials to NBC News. Were you

inspired when you saw his face on TV? I just bet seeing how much attention he received spurred you on. I won't participate. If I had my druthers, I'd have you perish without a single person knowing your name.

All the worst,

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